

Student Success Story



How to become a beer sommelier?

Our student Sandra Lopar made her marks in this relatively new but growing profession as a beer sommelier.

A beer sommelier, also called a cicerone, is a trained professional, working in the hospitality and alcoholic beverage industry, who specializes in the service and knowledge of beer. The knowledge required for a beer sommelier certification includes an understanding of styles, brewing, ingredients, history of beer and brewing, glassware, beer service, draft systems, beer tasting, and beer pairings.

The Swiss beer market

It is a little-known fact, but Switzerland holds an unusual world record; that of having the most breweries per capita. It is home to more than 1'000 active beer producers, putting it ahead of countries like the Czech Republic, Germany, Belgium, Austria or Canada which have long-standing reputations for brewing the amber liquid.

Diverse beer tastes

The multiplication of regional and micro-breweries in Switzerland is certainly a product of the evolution of tastes. Many consumers prefer to drink less but better by seeking out diverse and locally brewed beers. They are also ready to pay a higher price for a more authentic flavor. As numerous local specialities are appearing more frequently in the market, this offers a fantastic playground for beer sommeliers.

It is in this market, rich in diversity, that Sandra Lopar, a Swiss Professional Degree student at EHL Campus Passugg has embarked in a journey to acquire the skills and know-how to develop in this field while exploring the various career opportunities the hospitality industry has to offer.

"For a long time, alcohol didn't mean much to me, especially not high-proof drinks. But with the desire to travel came the joy of variety, I got to know new things like different beers, and so during my apprenticeship I spontaneously set myself the goal of tasting a beer from every country in the world."

Meet Sandra Lopar

My passion and my lifeblood motivate me to never stand still and to always develop myself further. I live my dreams, fight for my goals, and am grateful for the learning fields I am allowed to tread every day. I see myself as a commercial all-rounder who loves to travel, with an affinity for human resources, a soft spot for finance and accounting and a great passion for the lively gastronomy and hotel industry.

"I am passionate about beer, and I am incredibly proud of how strongly the Swiss beer scene has developed. It's a big boom and just great to watch. Beer has become much more than just a drink you have at the end of the working day. It's a lifestyle product, it embodies passion, enjoyment, variety and adventure. It finally enjoys the status it deserves. And I'm totally thrilled to be a beer ambassador and a beer sommelier."

How did your career as a beer sommelier start?

In short, my registration for the beer sommelier certification course was very spontaneous. I had been studying the diversity of beer for some time and flirted with this further education, I was completely fascinated. Some friends worked in a brewery, and I was delighted by the variety of different brews and beer styles. Shortly before I started my studies at EHL Campus Passugg, I was lying in bed at night, surfed on Facebook and saw that due to a cancellation, a place in the Swiss Beer Sommelier Seminar of GastroSuisse became available. And I signed up immediately.

However, you did not decide to go all in on beer, but to study hotel management?

My passion is the subject of beer. And since I have dedicated myself to it, the entire industry has changed completely. Every day, the variety of beer grows, breweries emerge, consumer behavior changes... And it's not so easy to always stay "on track". It's often the same when studying. The semesters are intense, the timetables full, the pressure great, the classes new. And exactly those moments were always crucial for me, that's what I was looking for. I am convinced that, on the one hand, you need a lot of enthusiasm and heart and soul to study at a school like EHL Passugg. I advise every student to see their studies as a gift and a wonderful opportunity to discover oneself and the incredibly beautiful industry over and over again.

Why did you choose to study at EHL Passugg?

When I decided to go to a hotel management school, I looked at all the offers in Switzerland. But the EHL Campus Passugg captivated me from the very beginning. I liked the beautiful campus, the family atmosphere, the landscape, the outlet offers, the structure of the studies... After my visit, I was totally inspired, enchanted... For me, Passugg felt magical, and it still does. I believe that at EHL Campus Passugg you get a very valuable education, an authentic insight into the industry, and we can learn from many professionals. So many people from different nations meet in Passugg, we get to know new cultures and can grow beyond ourselves. This study program is a great enrichment for me in all respects, and I am overjoyed that I chose Passugg.

What are your further plans, and how did EHL Passugg lead you there?

I was able to get to know many areas during my studies and the internships, in particular, helped me find out what I wanted to do. Today I can proudly say that I achieved my goal even before graduation. I have recently been accepted for a job at the Landhotel Seemöwe in Thurgau, where I will be in charge of administration. And who knows, maybe at some point I'll spontaneously sign up for the higher beer sommelier certification course, do further training in HR, or fulfill my dream of owning my own small brewery with a restaurant and a few hotel rooms. Because even though I'm happy for the moment to have reached a milestone, it's clear to me that I won't rest on my laurels and my degree opens up numerous possibilities.

Hospitality studies are a place to explore your passions

Hospitality management studies are composed of diverse topics - a bit like beers! From operational classes like reception, cuisine or service to marketing, accounting and management, it offers students the opportunity to explore a variety of subjects and discover where their passion or interest lies.

Sandra Lopar, like many Swiss Professional Degree students, has been able throughout her exploration journey at EHL Campus Passugg, to confirm her passion for beer and develop a strong interest for Human Resources. Both of which make for a diverse and promising professional and personal life.

"EHL Campus Passugg is a wonderful platform to keep discovering yourself and new passions. We get so many interesting, future-oriented insights and can expand our horizons every semester. I have been able to discover a lot of new things about myself. I have become much more aware of sustainability, "regionality" has taken on a new importance, I'm even more interested in different gastronomy concepts... And privately, I'm living out my joy of baking bread and experimenting with different spice blends from all over the world."



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